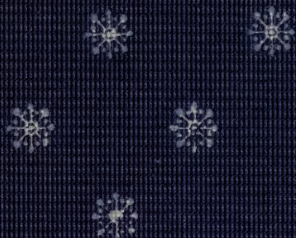


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Paradise



C. J.
Ridgeway





"In Paradise."

A COURSE OF LECTURES GIVEN IN CHRIST
CHURCH, LANCASTER GATE.

BY THE VERY REV.

CHARLES J. RIDGEWAY, D.D.,

Dean of Carlisle,

AUTHOR OF "THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM," "THE MOUNTAIN
OF BLESSEDNESS," "INSTRUCTIONS AND DEVOTIONS FOR THE
HOLY COMMUNION," ETC., ETC.

*afterwards
Bishop of Kensington.*

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Preface.

THESE Lectures are published at the request of some who heard them, and who have thought that they might be helpful to others who are called in God's love to pass "through the Valley of Weeping."

They lay no claim to novelty, but are a humble attempt to suggest some thoughts which may be fairly drawn from what is revealed to us in the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God.

C. J. R.

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I.

What do we know about the Spirits of those who die in the Lord?

"We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep."

"**T**O-DAY thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." So the dying Saviour speaks to the dying sinner. So the crucified Lord answers the prayer of the crucified criminal. So the thorn-crowned King opens the Kingdom of the spirit world to the penitent suppliant. And if this were all these words of Jesus meant, they would be precious to sinning and dying men and women for all time.

But they are much more than this to us. In them He Who came from Heaven that He might tell us heavenly things draws back the veil which hides the world of spirits from mortal eyes, and we are allowed to catch a brief glimpse of the redeemed in the land beyond the grave "after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh."

❧ What do we know about the Spirits

Who is there among us who has not at some time or other longed to know how it is with those who have passed out of our sight? Where are they? What are they doing? What are the conditions of that mysterious existence? What have they to do with us, and what have we to do with them? These are some of the questions which are formed in our minds, even if they are not spoken by our lips.

And it has always been so. From earliest times the idea of the immortality of man's spirit has asserted itself. "If a man die, shall he live again?" So the central figure in the drama of the Book of Job cries out in the day of his trial and adversity, and a wail of hopelessness makes itself heard because he can find no answer which will satisfy the longing of his immortal spirit. But there comes a brighter outlook later on when he gives a truer answer to his question, "I know that my Vindicator liveth, and He will stand at the last over my dust, and after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet without my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see on my side, and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger."

But it was a question which had made itself heard long before the Book of Job. Ever since man has

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begun to think, he has been looking into the unseen world, and wanting to know how it is there. Never has there been an age in which such thoughts have not made themselves felt and heard, such questions as these not asked by men who have yearned for light and knowledge. And answers have been given to them not only in words written and spoken, but in strange customs and curious usages. Yet for the most part they have been answers only telling how little, for all their searching, men knew.

They wanted to know in the days when men were rude and ignorant and undeveloped, and though, as we might expect, their answers are crude and vague, yet even in primitive man we find a glimmer of light, a faint presentiment that somehow and somewhere after death the spirit lived still, as they placed beside the dead man his arms and tools and ornaments, or left him a supply of food intended to meet his wants in his new abode.

We have lately had a striking instance of this in our own land. In the first year of the new century a prehistoric burying ground was discovered in North Cornwall, containing a very large number of skulls, which belonged, without doubt, to the late neolithic

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period. In those early graves it was found that provision was made for the spirit of the man after it had left the body—a weapon of some sort for protection—a flint or material for striking a light or making a fire—a meal of food placed near the mouth of the body. In one instance there was found fastened to the jaw of the skull a limpet shell, doubtless because the most ready supply of food for the journey of the spirit would be shell-fish gathered on the seashore.

In the same way, in ancient Mexico corn in the cob and in Peruvian graves a quaint bottle of water were discovered in the coffins, telling that man in his infancy had a dim belief in another world and another life, a faint inkling that the spirit outlived the body.

And as man made intellectual progress this belief gradually grew and developed. The more intelligent among the heathen held that the spirits of men lived on after death. But the joy, and indeed the reality, of living ended at death, and in the after state, as they thought of it, there was no future to look forward to, no possibility of progress, no change of condition, but only a dreary dragging out an aimless existence.

This belief, if we can call anything so vague and indistinct a belief, asserted itself in many ways. We

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find it among the Chinese in their ancestor worship, among the Persians in their teaching that the spirit passed into a kingdom of light or darkness, while in some of the great philosophers the conception of immortality stands out with a striking clearness, and the ghostly forms and restless shadows of earlier times come to have a real existence. How wonderful the way, for instance, in which Plato grasps the idea of the immortality of the spirit of a man when he teaches that "the life beyond the grave was to him the only real existence. Death was the enfranchisement from the prison of the body, the harbour of rest from the storms of life, the reunion of long parted friends, the admission into the society of the wise and good of former ages, the attainment of that perfect goodness and wisdom and beauty which had been the yearning of the embodied spirit during the years of its mortal life." Truly this is a perception of the truth which puts many Christians to shame.

So, too, with the teaching of the Bible It is progressive in its revelation of this as of other truths. In the Old Testament the teaching is dim and indistinct. Here and there one more spiritual than the rest groped his way out of the surrounding darkness

* + see Ulysses (Homer⁵) p. 57.

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and caught a glimpse of something brighter than earth could tell of. At first the glimmerings of the truth are faint and shortlived, succeeded by long intervals of hopeless materialism. But as time goes on the horizon grows lighter. Hope takes a more tangible form, a more real shape. The life of earth is not all ; it cannot end here. There must be a life beyond, where the tangle of the present will be unravelled and the inequalities of to-day put right. And as truer views of God are perceived, the life beyond the grave becomes more and more a manifestation not only of divine justice but of divine compassion, and mere existence opens out into a real life. So the belief in a higher and better life than is ours in the body is more and more firmly laid hold of by men until Jesus came, and "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Yes, it was to give rest to man's spirit Jesus came. But there could be no rest for man so long as he could not satisfy the yearning within him to know what became of man when his body has been placed in the grave. And in the promise of the Prince of life to the man dying by His side we may find a solution of the mystery of the spirit world about which we all want to know.

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There are two tendencies which at first sight seem to divide men in regard to this all important question. There are some who want to know and who discuss and conjecture and question how it is with those taken away from earth, and there are some who seem to put their dead out of their memory as well as out of their sight, and who do not seem to care to know.

The first of these tendencies is found, as we have just seen, in the sceptical or questioning attitude of men and in the answers which have been suggested, as, for instance, by the necromancy of the ancients, or the so-called spiritualism of modern days. The second is shown in the way in which men seem to try to forget their dead. Outward mourning is quickly discarded, and the conventional interval for abstaining from certain forms of amusement is more and more shortened.

At first sight, indeed, it would seem as if these two frames of mind were utterly contradictory, but seen closer we perceive that they in reality have much in common. They are linked by the prevailing ignorance about the spirit life, and by the unsatisfactory character of the solutions put forward. There is so much uncertainty, perplexity, difficulty in knowing about it, that as a consequence we find those who began by wanting

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to know giving it up as hopeless, and living as if they were content not to know or even to think.

It is then profitable for us to remember that we have never been told not to desire to know. Nay, glimpses of that other world have been given to us by our Lord and His Apostles, drawing us on that if haply we may, as we look again, look longer or more closely, and learn to know more. Windows have been, as it were, opened in Heaven, through which, as we look up, we may gaze by faith on the things unseen. They are things that are often only as shadows thrown on the blinds. But ever and anon the curtain which hides them is caught by the breeze, and as it opens for a moment, we catch sight of what is going on within.

Yea, we are meant to know, we can know, we are not to give up disappointed because we do not know all or can only see faint outlines. This is no reason why we may not know something.

First of all, because this knowledge, like all knowledge, must begin with what is elementary. The Bible is the written record of the growth of this knowledge about the unseen world, faint and indistinct at first, but standing out more clearly defined until "the True Light shineth, that coming into the world lighteth every man."

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And, secondly, because the knowledge of the unseen must always be partial and imperfect to those on earth. Here we have to do with the material, with the things of time and sense, but the things yonder are spiritual, unseen, eternal. Even the words in which we express these spiritual realities hinder rather than help us, for they naturally convey an earthly meaning and fail to express what we are trying to say. They are only figures of the true, and, taken literally, as men sometimes have done, as in the Book of the Revelation of St. John, they mislead those who read them.

This is why, when these things are spoken of in the Bible, we are told about them by parable, or in Eastern imagery or poetry, in order that as we look at these pictures, like little children, we may try and learn the unseen realities they represent. Or we are told about them in negatives, as though to remind us that no language of earth can really tell us what is there, only what is not. We are bid to learn how it is in the unseen world by the absence of things we are accustomed to fear and shrink from, rather than by the presence of things that please and satisfy our senses. Hence it is written of the other

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world, "Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying, nor pain any more"; "the sea is no more"; "the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day, for there shall be no night there."

But like all knowledge, this knowledge, imperfect though it is, is profitable to us. It is good for us to try to know. The very difficulty of knowing has its use, for knowledge which is easily acquired does not as a rule make a lasting impression, while the sustained effort to know fastens it upon our minds, emphasizes its importance, and helps us to realize its value. It is the knowledge which is acquired with labour that is deeply cut into our memory, and is not easily forgotten by us.

How then does this knowledge of the unseen world, imperfect as it is, influence us for good?

1. It lays hold of a natural instinct within us, and raises it into higher sphere. Men love to have memorials of the great or good. Never has there been an age or a nation in which the memory of those who have done noble deeds has not been held in honour. The crumbling pillars found in lands whose history belongs to the long ago; the cairn of stones on the mountains in the northern parts of the island in which we live;

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the Shinto Temples in Japan, erected in honour of great heroes whose tombs they guard ; the newest statue in this or other cities ; all these bear witness to the universality of this instinct of hero-worship.

2. And this instinct is not only an expression of sentiment. It is an energizing principle. In its light the past becomes a glorious inheritance, in which we claim to have a part. The present is filled with splendid opportunities, for noble ancestors beget noble deeds. The future is lit up with the hope of progress, that we may hand on to those who come after us what, ay, it may be more than, we have received from those who came before us.

3. It is this same principle the Church from earliest times has sought to utilize and sanctify. We find it in the Festivals set apart long ago which mark the great events in our Lord's life. We find it in Saints' Days, in which we commemorate those who followed most closely in His train. We find it in "All Saints' Day," which embraces all in every generation who have lived and died in His faith and fear.

4. Surely then we are right as Christians in finding a place for the working of this instinct in the remembrance of those we have loved and lost awhile. We

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do well, instead of forgetting, to follow those who have died in the Lord into the Paradise where they are with Christ, and try to learn how it is with them.

Yea, such an attitude is good for us, for it brings us nearer to those who are gone from us, and helps us to realize some of the meaning of the Communion of Saints. It makes us strive to do as they did, that we may be hereafter where they are. It encourages us to seek after spiritual knowledge, and quickens our spiritual perception by exercising it. It keeps us humble as we recognize how little we know, and humility is the condition of all true knowledge. It is, too, very practical. Before we visit some far-off land we do well to read about it, to make ourselves acquainted as far as possible with its character, not from mere curiosity, but in order that we may prepare and make us ready, that when we get there we may not be altogether strangers in a strange land. And why should we not seek in like manner to acquaint ourselves with the Paradise of God, if indeed we hope to dwell there when this life is over?

5 Last, and not least, this desire to know what is after death is the best corrective of worldliness. Let me quote to you the words of one who expresses what I would say far better than I can hope to do.


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"Worldliness," says Bishop Webb, "I think is the great temptation of the day. When I consider the temptations amidst which we now live, the probation which we have now to face, and the difficulties with which we have now to contend, it seems to me that there is a "great tribulation" coming on the faithful, in the form—not so much of unbelief—as of *worldliness*; because the world is becoming more and more full of interest, of brilliancy, of life, of vitality. . . .

"The greatest corrective of worldliness however is not simply to preach against it and to set ourselves against it but to realize that around us there is another world; with as true an interest, with a greater glory and brilliancy. We have to take in the *whole* state of things around us; not merely this little bit of God's great universe! We have to 'look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen.' 'Our citizenship is in Heaven'; we must learn to realize the City and its Citizens: the society, the company in which our true life is thrown, giving some time quietly and calmly to take in these unseen realities, so as to gain a truer apprehension of the world invisible. To us, in this present world it is invisible; and yet in one sense it is as *present* as this visible world.

What do we know about the Spirits, etc.

It is a real world now going on, into which any of us may any day be called to enter. It is around us now. The majority of men are there already, and most of us will also be there before fifty years are over."



It is to the contemplation of this other world we invite you this Lent, that humbly and reverently we may, by the teaching of Divine Spirit, learn to know more about it. For surely in thus seeking to know we may take to ourselves the words which St. Paul wrote in the first century of the Christian era: "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep, that ye sorrow not even as the rest, which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

II.

Where are They?

"In Paradise."

WHERE are they? Who of us has not asked this question?

The Saints of God, their labour past, go forth from us, out of the mists and fogs of this earth-bound life, across the river of death, and are lost to our sight. They enter through the gate of death which separates us from the world of spirits, and we see them no more.

But now, as we knelt by the bedside, we held the hand that pressed ours in token of the affection that was still strong and true, though the body was so weak. We heard the whisper with which they bade us farewell. We looked into the eyes we knew so well and saw the far-off look in them that told of parting. And in a moment they were gone from us, and we, left behind on this side the stream, would fain follow them in longing thought. We strain our eyes as Elisha watched

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his loved Master receding from his view, or as the disciples on the Mount of Olives gazed upward till they could see their ascending Lord no longer, and still stood looking up into Heaven.

Or as we watch through our tears the coffin in which is the loved form, lowered into the ground, we hear the solemn words of committal, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," and we are forced to realize that the one we loved is not really there. It is only the body, the poor, worn-out raiment we had, as it were, folded up with reverent care and put away from us.

No, it is not among the dead we must seek the living, and we long to know whither our dear ones have gone after death. Where are they? we ask, as sadly we return home alone without them. We will not let go of the hope of the life everlasting, and of the fact of the world to come, which has sounded in our ears all through the Burial Service. We cling to it as all we have to link us with those we miss and mourn. But we are sad at heart, and sigh in our disappointment, because we see so dimly, we know so little, we are told so indistinctly what we want to know about them.

Where are They? ~~so~~

Ah, yes, it is part of our present state of trial that "now we see in a mirror, darkly," that "now we know in part," and we are tempted to forget that the time is surely coming when "we shall see face to face, and shall know fully, even as we have been known."

And yet we do know, even if it is only in part. We do see, though we may be only as those who behold the reflection in a mirror. We have not been left in total ignorance. We are "not to be sorry as men without hope." Enough is told to help, guide, comfort those who long to know how it is with "them that are fallen asleep in Jesus," as they look up reverently into the Father's face and humbly ask, Lord, where are they?

What then do we know about that which is beyond the veil? What answer can we find to our question?

Three conditions of human existence are set before us in Holy Scripture and confirmed by our reasoning powers.

①. There is man's life here on earth. In it the spirit of the man dwells, might we not rather say, is imprisoned within a material body, energizing and working through the avenues of the bodily senses and faculties. It is the condition which the writer of the Poem of Creation pictures in Eastern imagery,

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when he says, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." It is your and mine condition in this present life, from the cradle to the grave, from the moment we came into this world to the moment when we depart out of it again. It is a reality to all save those who say that there is no spirit, and believe that man is but as one of the beasts that perish.

- ② Secondly, there is the Resurrection life, as spoken of by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv., and confirmed by the analogy of nature. It is the life in which the spirit of the man shall be re clothed with a body, a body identical with his former material body but differing widely from it, even as the plant or golden corn or flower differs from the seed from which it springs. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." This was the life which was lived by our Lord during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, and is still lived by Him in glory. His was a body recognized by those who had known Him in the flesh and believed

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in Him, but it was a body unlike the body of His Humiliation He had worn from His birth to His grave. It was a body unfettered by the limitations of space and motion to which our bodies are subject. His Resurrection body was a spiritual body, not as heretofore a natural or a material body.

- ③ But between these two conditions of life, so like and yet so unlike, there is a third. We call it the Intermediate State. It begins at death, and ends at the Resurrection. It is the state in which body and spirit are separated. It is the state of which the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes caught a glimpse when he said, "Then shall the dust return to the dust as it was, and the spirit return to God Who gave it." It is the state which St. Paul (2 Cor. 1-4) describes as "unclothed, when the earthly house of our bodily frame is dissolved," and of which St. Peter (2 Peter 1-14) writes, "Knowing that the putting off of this tabernacle cometh swiftly." It is the state of which Jesus was speaking when He addressed His gracious promise to the dying criminal at His side, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." It is the state in which St. Peter (1 Peter iii. 15-19) tells us Jesus Himself was living when "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened

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in the Spirit, He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

It is well called the Intermediate State, ^{(a) in line} ^{(b) in nature} because it comes between the sinning life of humiliation on earth and the perfected life of glory in Heaven, in both of which the body and spirit of the man have their part, (whereas in the Intermediate State the body has been laid aside, and only the spirit of the man exists.

It must exist, if man is in any real sense an immortal being; in other words, if he retains his living personality after death. It is part of that belief in the immortality of the spirit of which the distinguished author of the "History of Civilization" says that "the belief in a future state approaches certainty nearer than any other belief, and it is one which, if eradicated, would drive most of us to despair."

It must exist, for the material body with its physical powers and sensations undoubtedly dies, and we put it away as a decaying, corruptible thing, of which it has been truly said, "Dust thou art, unto dust shalt thou return." But the spirit of a man, what becomes of it? If there be an immortal spirit, then it must live on somewhere and somehow, or else "the life of the world to come," in which we declare our belief in the

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Nicene Creed, and of which Max Muller says, that "without it religion is like an arch resting on one pillar, like a bridge ending in an abyss," is not a reality, but a mockery and a delusion. In a word, at death the spirit of the man, free from this perishable because material body, enters the Intermediate State, and therein awaits the Resurrection Day, when, with body and spirit united, the man shall enter the full fruition of Heaven, and dwell with God in the perfection of the glorified life.

And yet this Intermediate State, with all it involves, has been strangely lost sight of. In the Reformation period we find it again and again ignored, and even denied by well-meaning men as an error against which they solemnly and vehemently protested. One of the Homilies in the First Book, published in the reign of Edward VI., seems intentionally to allow no place for such a state in the Christian Creed. In it we are told that death, "delivering us from our bodies, doth send us straight home into our own country, and maketh us to dwell presently with God for ever in everlasting rest and quietness." It is possible this may rather be incorrectness of expression than of belief. But the Westminster Confession, drawn up by the Puritan

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divines in the the time of Cromwell's rebellion (1643), is unmistakably explicit, and lays down as an article of faith that "for souls separated from their bodies Scripture acknowledges no place except Heaven and hell."

There can be little doubt that this omission of the Intermediate State was a reaction from the error of "the Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory," and is only one instance out of many of the proneness of men to run into extremes, and to be carried away by the fear of believing too much into the no less dangerous error of believing too little, instead of finding a resting-place in the truth lying between the two extremes.

In order, then, to clear the ground it is necessary for us to ascertain what is the exact meaning of Purgatory as taught by the Roman Church. My experience tells me that there is a great deal of haziness in the minds of Anglican churchpeople on this point. There need not, however, be any doubt as to what the "Romish doctrine" really is, for it was authoritatively formulated at the Council of Florence, 1439. It runs thus: "If men have died truly penitent and in the love of God, but before they have made satisfaction for sins of omission and commission by worthy fruits of

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repentance, their souls are purified after death by the pains of Purgatory, and to the relief of those pains avail the prayers of the faithful, the sacrifices of Masses, Supplications, Alms, and other offices of piety . . . while the souls of others who die in mortal sin, or even in original sin (*i.e.*, unbaptized infants), descend into hell to be punished with unequal punishment." The Council of Trent (1543) lays down that "there is a Purgatory, and the souls detained are helped by prayer, and chiefly by the acceptable sacrifice of the Altar," while a Catechism drawn up at the same Council for the instruction of the young teaches that "there is a Purgatorial fire where the souls of the righteous, being tormented for an indefinite time, are purified, that an entrance may be given them into their eternal home."

You will observe that the effect of this teaching is to limit the Intermediate State, called by the Roman Church Purgatory, to some spirits only. The souls of the martyrs and very holy men pass, according to this theory, at once into Heaven, while those who die outside the pale of salvation, the very wicked or the unbaptized, enter immediately the place of everlasting torment. On the other hand, the souls of the

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faithful, who, because they have not made amends for their sins at death, enter Purgatory, do not remain there until the Resurrection, but as soon as they have paid the allotted penalty, or sufficient prayers and masses and alms have been offered for them, pass, after a longer or shorter duration, into the bliss of Heaven. And it was from this doctrine of the Intermediate State men recoiled.

But we must bear in mind that the danger of overlooking the existence of the Intermediate State is not a thing of the past only, or restricted to the throes of the Reformation. In our day it is to be feared there is a practical disbelief in it. It is a disbelief sometimes openly avowed. A parish priest told me, only a short time ago, that when at a Bible Class of intelligent men he spoke about the Intermediate State, those present, with a very few exceptions, at first refused to accept the teaching.

Even if it is not deliberately rejected, it has to a great extent lost any practical hold on Christians. How often we hear it said of those who have died that they have "gone to Heaven." It may be in the recollection of some that a few years ago when Mr. Spurgeon died abroad a telegram was sent to England

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in the following terms, "Mr. Spurgeon went to Heaven this morning at 1 a.m." And a short time back the announcement of a death in a daily paper was followed by these lines:—

"Earth holds one gentle soul the less,
And Heaven one angel more."

There cannot indeed be any doubt that, in the minds of not a few devout Christians, the Intermediate State after death as distinguished from the Heavenly State after the Resurrection has no real existence, and that they have never seriously considered what becomes of the spirit of a man when at death it quits the body in which it has tabernacled on earth and awaits the Resurrection Day.

What then are we to believe about the Intermediate State? What do we know, what are we told about it?

And, first, we would do well to ask what was the Jewish belief about it, as far as we can gather from the Old Testament and their other writings, before Jesus came into this world.

It would seem that at first the Jews believed the world of spirits to be a vast tomb, with gates barred and bolted, in which spirits lie like corpses in their rocky sepulchres, and where death reigns as the King

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of Terrors. The word translated "Hell" in the Authorized Version is the Hebrew "Sheol" meaning a hollow or covered-over place, while the word "Hell" is from the Saxon verb "hellen," to cover or roof in.

(b) But later on, certainly after the Captivity, they called this Sheol or abode of the spirits of the dead "Hades," which, most unfortunately, is rendered "~~Hell~~" in the Authorized Version in both Old and New Testaments, though it has been corrected in the Revised Version. It is also so rendered in the Apostles' Creed, "He descended into ~~hell~~," whereas the word "hell" really means the unseen world or world of spirits.

(c) X At the time of our Lord the popular Jewish teaching was that Hades had two divisions, in which the spirits of the righteous and ungodly were kept, but separated from one another, awaiting the Judgment Day, when the final destiny of each would be pronounced. The one part was a place of pain and punishment, the other of rest and peace, and to the latter in which the spirits of the righteous dwelt they gave distinct designations, calling it "Paradise," or "Abraham's Bosom."

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tionary
When then we turn to our Lord's teaching in the New Testament, we find He does not when speaking to the Jews contradict this belief current among them, as

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He surely would have done if it had been erroneous and wrong, but He adopts it as the basis of His teaching. He acquiesces in it, and seals it with the mark of His Divine approval. He even makes use of these terms with which they were familiar when He is speaking to them of the Intermediate State.

In His parable of Dives and Lazarus He tells us that the ~~bodies of both the rich man and the beggar were buried~~, but the men themselves, that is their spirits, were in Hades, only with this difference, that while the spirit of the rich man was in torment, the spirit of the poor man rested in Abraham's bosom. True, it is only a parable, but a parable is a true story (not a fable) with a heavenly meaning, or it is misleading and teaches nothing, ay, worse than nothing.

Again, in His gracious answer to the prayer for mercy of the dying thief, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," our Lord clearly recognizes the rest of Paradise, into which the spirit of both Saviour and sinner shall enter immediately after death. Whereas, according to the Romish doctrine of Purgatory, neither of them would have gone to Paradise, for the Spirit of Jesus, as the Sinless One, would have passed at once

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into Heaven, and the spirit of the criminal into Hell.

What, then, are we to understand by our Lord's words? Was He only quieting the fears of the man with meaningless words in the hour of death, as we alleviate the bodily sufferings of our dying ones with anæsthetics? Nay, He was assuring the man, in terms that he could understand, that it would be well with him after his spirit had left the weak and tortured body. And, without doubt, it was thus the man would interpret the answer to his prayer, for evidently he was a Jew, carefully instructed as was every Jew in his religion, and familiar with its terms. Only a Jew could have prayed that prayer, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom," for it spoke of the Messiah, the Anointed One, in expectation of Whose visible kingdom, to be set up on earth, the Jewish nation lived. And this incident at any rate is no parable, but a real event in our Lord's life that cannot be explained away.

And the teaching of the Apostles is in harmony with it. St. Paul, in 2 Cor. iv., and 1 Thess. iv. 13-18; St. Peter, in his First Epistle, iii. 18-19; St. John, in the Book of Revelation, vi. 9, all agree in this aspect of the Intermediate State.

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And the Church's teaching from earliest times has been in strict accordance with the doctrine of our Lord and His Apostles. In the Apostles' Creed we sing or say, "He was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into Hades" (i.e., the world of spirits), and afterwards, "He ascended into Heaven."

And our Church takes up the same strain, as in the Burial Service she reminds us that the "souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity," but bids us pray that "we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory." So she brings together the three conditions of which we have spoken: (1) The present life of body and spirit, lived on earth amid "the miseries of this sinful world"; (2) "The joy and felicity" in Paradise of the spirit delivered from the burden of the flesh; and (3) "The perfect consummation and bliss" which await God's people both in body and soul, in the eternal and everlasting glory of the Resurrection life in Heaven.

This then is our answer to the question we ask concerning those who have died in the Lord, Where are


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they? They are "in Paradise," in the Intermediate State, where the spirits of the faithful rest in peace, awaiting their perfect happiness, when, clothed in glorified bodies, they shall pass into the Presence of God in Heaven.

III.

How is it with Them?

"With Me in Paradise."

"HE souls of the righteous are in the hand of the Lord, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, but they are in peace." *Wis. III.*

Yes, the spirits of those "who die in the Lord" are in the Intermediate State, known to the Jews as Paradise. To use the words of our own Prayer Book: "Delivered from the burden of the flesh," and "taken out of the miseries of this sinful world, they are in joy and felicity," not, as some would have us believe to our unutterable grief, in pain and torment. "In joy and felicity," but not yet entered into "the perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul," which awaits the redeemed in the eternal and everlasting glory of Heaven.

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But we want to know not only where they are, but how is it with them? What is the nature of that Intermediate State which is theirs between death and the Resurrection? What can we know about it? Is there any light thrown upon it in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles?

Surely we do not ask in vain. It is not only the hollow echo of our own longing which comes back to us, but an answer, a revelation, at once real and helpful.

It is indeed suggested to us by the name of "Paradise," by which Jesus calls this State into which the spirits of the righteous enter and are at peace.

With us Paradise has come to be regarded as a synonym of the Garden of Eden, although, strangely enough, it is never so used in our English Bible. In it the word occurs only three times, and always in the New Testament, where it is applied not to the Garden of Eden, but to the state of the disembodied spirit after death. But it has been familiarized to us in this aspect by one of England's greatest poets, and is entwined with our earliest religious teaching.

Paradise, as we read the Mosaic story, tells us of man in a state of innocence, living a life of uninter-

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rupted communion with God, a being sinless and therefore at peace with his God and himself. Y

Paradise, as we think of it, ^{was} ~~is~~ not a permanent home, but a place prepared for man, man innocent, but not perfect, his powers undeveloped, his will undisciplined, his worth unproved, his character unformed.

Paradise is a place where man was put by God, as in a school, for a time and for a purpose, in order that he might be trained for enlarged opportunities, for wider possibilities, for a higher destiny, for closer communion with God, for perfect happiness.

Paradise is lost by man's own sinful, deliberate choice, forfeiting his birthright, and going forth a restless wanderer.

Paradise can be regained, for man is not left to wander in misery. God, Who made him, pitied him, and in the infinite greatness of divine compassion, came down to earth in human likeness to seek and save man; came to lead him back through the thorns and briars of sin which had sprung up so thick and rank in this wilderness world, to another Paradise prepared for him, where all, yea more than he had lost shall be his never

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to be lost again, where redeemed and saved he shall dwell in peace—

“Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through
In God’s most holy sight.”

This, all this, has become crystallized in our minds around the name of Paradise.

But it is strange to learn that the word Paradise, unknown in our English story of Eden, is also never found in the original Hebrew Scriptures. Indeed, the word is not a Jewish but a Persian word, which would seem to have become known to the Jews during their long Babylonian captivity, when they, to a great extent, lost their old Hebrew language, and were familiarized with foreign thoughts and words.

Paradise was the name given to the Royal Park or enclosure which the Eastern monarch delighted to have adjoining his palace—richly wooded, well watered, and amply stocked with game, a garden of delights. And so in time it came to be used of any place which was exceedingly beautiful and desirable.

Hence, when the Old Testament Scriptures were translated from the Hebrew into Greek, the language

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at that time of the then known world, the translators, not finding a suitable equivalent word in Greek for the Hebrew expression "Garden of Eden," adopted the Persian word "Paradise" as the best they could employ. Later on, when the views of the Jews as to the future state became clearer, it was applied to that part of Hades, or the spirit world, into which the souls of the righteous passed at death. It was so Jesus used it on the Cross, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." So St. Paul used it when he told how "he was caught up into the Paradise." So, too, St. John, in the Book of the Revelation, when he writes of "the tree of life in the Paradise of God."

We cannot then be wrong in endeavouring to find in this figure some answer to the question, "How is it with the spirits in Paradise?" Only we must be careful not to be carried away by Eastern imagery and poetry, and lose sight of the reality; not to be so engrossed in the parable as to fail to perceive the truth of which it tells; not to look so intently at the picture that we overlook the verity of which it is only a picture; not to be so absorbed in the type that it shuts out from our gaze the antitype, instead of helping us, as it was intended, to realize it more clearly.

Paradise is not Heaven, but the outer
court / entrance to Heaven, where on

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This was a mistake which was made by the Jews. "In the Rabbinical schools," writes a learned divine and scholar of our day, "fancy seems to have run riot on the subject of Paradise, its location, its extent, its glories, etc. It had seven names. . . . Two gates of rubies were said to lead into it. Beside them stand sixty myriads of holy angels, with countenances shining like the light of Heaven. When a righteous man enters, the vestures of death are taken off. He is clad in eight robes of the clouds of glory, two crowns are placed on his head; he is lauded and hailed with words of welcome."

And we, too, need to be on our guard lest we yield to the same tendency, for it is to be found among prosaic English people to-day, just as among the more poetic Easterns. There is a danger that for Christians, as for them, the spiritual should be lost sight of in the material, the real in the fanciful, the heavenly in the earthy.

And as men have tried to discover where on earth the Garden of Eden was situated, and, influenced by this idea, Columbus, thinking he had found the Garden of Eden when he discovered the New World, wrote: "The saintly theologians and philosophers were right when they fixed the site of the

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terrestrial Paradise in the extreme Orient, because it is the most temperate clime, and the lands which I have just discovered are the limits of the Orient. I am convinced that there is the terrestrial Paradise," even so there have been, and still there are, those who have wanted to know where the Paradise of the spirit world is, and have tried to describe its exact locality.

Paradise is below us, we have been told, while Heaven is above us, forgetful that above and below are geographical terms, only relative to the revolutions of this earth on which we live. They have maintained that it must be close to Heaven, as a King's garden was near his palace. One writer goes so far as to ask whether we may not say that, like the Paradise of Eden, the Paradise of the spirit world is material in substance. And they have forgotten that all such questioning is destructive of the Paradise an entry into which Jesus promised to the penitent criminal after death, for in His gracious promise there is no suggestion of a material Paradise which can be localized. So when St. Paul tells us he was caught up into Paradise he gives no encouragement to such materialistic teaching, for, whatever may be his exact meaning, his was certainly a spiritual vision of spiritual realities, in which

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his spirit heard the words unspeakable by human lips or in earthly language.

No, we cannot materialize the spirit world any more than we can materialize a spirit without a body, though men, in so-called Spiritualism, profess to be able to do so. We cannot localize Paradise any more than we can localize Heaven. Divested of their bodies, the spirits of those who die in the Lord are in another world, but not in another place. Paradise is not an Intermediate Place, but an Intermediate State. Happily for us, for we could know nothing about a spiritual place, but we can know something about a spiritual state.

What, then, does Jesus teach us concerning the Intermediate State? For what was true not only of His sinless Spirit, but true also of the spirit of the forgiven sinner, must be true of all redeemed spirits.

The Intermediate State, like the Paradise of Eden, is a state of life.

This needs no proof. If the spirit of man be immortal it must live, whether it be "in the body," or "out of the body," and if the spirit be not immortal then there can be no Paradise. God "is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him,"

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and by the truth of this immortality of the spirit all teaching about Paradise must stand or fall.

But what sort of life is it? What can we learn about it?

First, then, it is a personal life. It must be so, for the spirit of a man is himself, his body is his, and he does not cease to be himself when he is "unclothed" of his body any more than when he lays aside his raiment. It is a personal life, for this is the only real life, and nothing else will satisfy man's immortal aspirations and desires. Will it sustain us, think you, in our dying to know that the stream of our individual life will after death be lost in the great ocean of impersonal life, or that we shall live in the memory of a grateful humanity? Will it comfort us in our bereavement to be told that the life of each dear one is reabsorbed and merged for ever in the divine? Will it help us to a higher estimate of the sacredness of life to believe that the return of the spirit to God makes an end of the individual to whom it belonged, and memory, conscience, will, experience, become as if they had never been, in other words, that death is the annihilation of everything that goes to make up that mysterious entity which we call personality? Thank

(1)

(a)

not, (b)
not, (c)

not, (d)

(e)
not,

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God, we know and believe better things than this. To us the spirit lives independent of the body, with a real personality which severance of body and spirit cannot touch.

This is what our Lord means when He says to the dying thief, "Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," and His words would have been a mockery if He did not believe in a personal life. It was this hope of an immortal personality which made St. Paul cry, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"? For how could it be better if to be with Christ was the destruction of all that makes a man himself? Nay, better the most wretched existence on earth which retains the reality of personality than such a shadow of a hope, if hope at all it can be called, which has not in it even the semblance of a substance.

But if the life of Paradise be personal, it follows that it is a conscious life.

True, those who die are said "to fall asleep in Jesus." Our Lord Himself says, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."

It is a natural figure, and one we might expect to find used of death, not only by Jesus and Christians, but also, as it often is, by the heathen, by whom sleep has been described as "the brother of death."

"She is not dead, but sleeping" = Not dead for ever, but life quiescent, as sleep; but

How is it with Them? so

It is a figure eloquent of the act of dying. How like the falling to sleep the ending of the bodily life often is. We say of dear ones, when we have seen them quietly breathe their life away, that it was just as if they went to sleep.

It is a figure suggested by the appearance of a dead body. The face is so still, so calm, so peaceful, that it might well be sleep. Indeed, we not seldom mistake sleep for death, and death for sleep, and sometimes it is only as we hear the quiet beating of the heart or the gentler breathing of the lungs that we are reassured, and know our fear was groundless.

Yea, more, it is a figure applicable to the spirit of a man after death, for death is to him an act of resting from work or worry, even as we speak of taking rest in sleep. And it has a certain appropriateness in that as we go to sleep in expectation of the waking when daylight dawns, so "they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."

But there is one thing the figure does not teach us, as some would have us believe, about death. Sleep is not a state of unconsciousness. The spirit of a man is awake when his body lies motionless in sleep, and never is that self-perception of the spirit which

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we call consciousness more wide awake. Then, if ever, its powers are free and unfettered. Apparently all its limitations are removed when and because the body is wrapped in slumber. It is only part of the man that is asleep. The brain is at work, and our dreams are powerfully and mysteriously affected by sounds which fall on our ears as we sleep, by words spoken which we did not know we heard.

No, it certainly is not of an unconscious life after death the dying Jesus is speaking.

"With Me"—what profit to the dying penitent is this promise, if to be with the thorn-crowned King in Paradise is nothing more than the sleep of the dead that lie side by side in the same grave, and know it not. And if there be no consciousness in Paradise, then the story of Dives and Lazarus, as spoken by our Lord, is not a parable to teach us, but a fable to deceive us, for it makes unconscious spirits think and talk.

"With Me." Surely to those first disciples to whom it was told what Jesus said on the Cross these words could only have meant a conscious life, as they pictured the living Saviour and the living sinner together in "Paradise."

"With Me." What memories must the words have

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brought back to the Apostles as they thought of the days when for three short years, only too short, they had been with Him, had companied with Him, had basked in the sunshine of His loving Presence, listened to His teaching, gazed upon His beauty of character, and learned of Him Who was meek and lowly of heart.

"With Me." Must not this have been the grand reality found in the heart and mind of St. Paul, as he tells of his desire "to depart and be *with Christ*, for it is very far better"? Who can believe that the Apostle would willingly have exchanged the work his Master had entrusted to him for an unconscious existence in Paradise, and have thought it better? Nay, as in Eden man lived a conscious life, so in the Paradise of God, where dwell "the spirits of those that depart hence in the Lord," all live not only in Him, but with Him, in sweet, because conscious, communion.

"Hail, heavenly voice, once heard in Patmos,
'Write, Henceforth the dead who die in Christ are blest;
Yea, saith the Spirit, for they now shall rest
From all their labours!'

But no dull dark night
That rest o'ershadows; 'tis the dayspring bright
Of bliss; the foretaste of a richer feast;
A sleep, if sleep it be, of lively zest,
Peopled with visions of intense delight."

as How is it with Them?

Then do we ask very humbly and reverently, what is Paradise? We answer, "It is to be with Christ." Do we ask, Where is Paradise? We answer, "It is where Christ is." Do we ask, How is it with those in Paradise? We answer, "They live with a life personal and conscious." Do we ask how we can know? We answer, "Jesus Himself taught us, when He said to the crucified malefactor on the cross at His side, 'Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'"

IV.

What are the Conditions of the Intermediate State?

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours."

THE Intermediate State is a life, a real life, because it is a personal and conscious life.

Nothing less definite than this will satisfy the longings of man's immortal spirit as to his future destiny. Nothing less definite will meet our yearnings for those we have loved and lost awhile. Nothing less definite will interpret the teaching of our Lord about the spirit world either in parable or from the Cross. Nothing less definite will explain the attitude of the Apostolic writers to the crisis of death and what comes after death.

But what are the conditions of this life?

We know by experience something of the possibilities and limitations of our life here on earth. We

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are ever learning more and more about it. Can we learn—are we told anything as to the conditions of the life hereafter in Paradise?

Surely we are not left altogether in the dark. There must be some light given to guide and comfort us. Yes, glimpses of the unseen land are permitted to us which help to make the devout guesses of twilight times a certainty to us upon whom the daylight of truth has dawned. Good news of the spirit world are found in the Gospel message to cheer and inspirit us. Voices speak and call to us to look up and learn some, at any rate, of the conditions of the life of the redeemed spirits in Paradise. To us as we gaze upwards in humble reverence a door is opened in Heaven, and we hear messengers which come from the Father of Lights speaking to us, and saying, "Come up higher, and I will show the things which shall be hereafter."

① And as we thus look and listen, we realize that the life yonder is marked by the condition of identity.

It must be so if the life is, as we have said, personal and conscious. Many things go to make up identity.

The bodily appearance is the factor in identity with which we are most familiar in the life we live here on

So, Christ. Thou, with Me. { We the same
yet different

of the Intermediate State? so

earth, the life in which the outward and visible body occupies so large a proportion of our thoughts and interests to the comparative exclusion of the paramount claims of the inward and unseen spirit.

But even here on earth identity is not always dependent on what is material in man, is it? One whom we have known and loved has been absent from us for years. He returns, but how changed he is. He was a lad when he left us, he comes back an old man. We look at his form; then as we remember him it was upright and alert, but now it is bent and feeble. The face is no longer fresh and youthful, but wrinkled and aged. The eyes so bright and keen are dimmed and sad. The very voice is different, its clear musical tones have died out, and it is shaky and worn. And yet that mysterious quantity we call identity outlives all those outward changes. We know him again; we recognize him in spite of all time has done to alter him. He is the same dear one, long lost but found, dead, as we supposed, but alive again. Character, disposition, memory, ay, and a mysterious something to which we cannot give a name, but which strikes an answering chord in hearts which love and cannot forget, all these and numberless other things go to

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make up what we call identity, which is so real although we cannot define or explain it.

And, think you, the spirit that retains its personality, its consciousness has lost its identity because it is freed from the body. We, indeed, who are in the body may find it hard to realize an identity which is altogether apart from visible form, but we cannot doubt that the spirits of the righteous in Paradise know and are known.

There is no need to dress up the spirit, when it quits the body, in a temporary visible form which it shall wear during the Intermediate State, in order that the man may retain his identity there, and be known and recognized by fellow spirits in the spirit world.

Yet this is what some have attempted to do. They, because they are in the body, cannot imagine an identity which survives the body and is independent of it, or realize an identity of spirit which is real to spirit, nay, far more real than an identity which is dependent on outward form.

And so, unable to escape from bodily limitations, they have invented a new sort of body to take the place of the material body which has been put away and has returned to the dust until the Resurrection, when

of the Intermediate State? s

the spirit shall be reclothed with a spiritual body. Thus a well-known writer says, "The difficulty of preserving our identity after death would be greatly diminished if we accepted the theory that there are spirit forms, and that the soul, when it has left the body, still retains some incorporeal shape or figure." While another writes, "It seems to us that Holy Scripture, so far from saying that the spirits of the righteous have no bodily (*sic*) form when they depart hence, seem to imply the contrary." While a third suggests that "when the animal body is shuffled off for ever the spirit still finds itself clothed in an intermediate body adjusted to the conditions of Paradise, which is destined to be changed into the glorified body."

But there is no need for us to make the parable of Dives and Lazarus as spoken by our Lord literal and material, because in it He speaks of the tip of the finger of Lazarus, the tongue of Dives, the flames of Hades, any more than Abraham's Bosom is to be understood literally. Nor need we follow the wild vagaries of so-called Spiritualism, which has invented what it terms "materialized spirits," in order to satisfy the morbid cravings of those who would have intercourse through eye and ear and touch with the spirit world after a

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material and earthly manner. We are dealing with the identity of the disembodied spirits, the recognition of spirit by spirit, not the recognition of the spirits of those who have left us by those who are still on earth. And we can thank God that for those who have died in the Lord the seen things are passed away, the unseen are the things that remain, and that with them identity is a spiritual thing and not a bodily. It is of this Jesus is speaking in the parable, as He teaches us the identity of the spirits of both rich and poor man, and therefore of their mutual recognition in Hades.

But it also follows that if there be this identity then the life of the Intermediate State is a continuous life. There can be no snapping of the life of the immortal spirit, no break before and after death, no interval between the last sigh on earth and the life in Paradise. Death is only the gate through which the spirit passes from time into eternity, from this material world into the spirit world, from earth into Paradise. True the body is no longer with those who have done their earthly probation, but the death of the bodily life does not, cannot, as we have seen, affect the life of the spirit.

X "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Men have indeed lost sight of this in the prevailing ten-

of the Intermediate State? so

dency to materialize the spiritual. They have not only asked where Paradise is, but how far it is away from earth, and they have forgotten that in the spirit world there is no such thing as distance, as there is no time, no place. Nay, these are of the earth, earthy. We might as well talk literally of cold and heat, spring and summer, light and shade, fountains of water or fruitful trees in Paradise. We may, we do, sing of them in our hymns, but poetry is not fact.

It is a very old mistake thus to try and measure the distance from earth to Paradise, or try and know how long it will take the spirit to accomplish the journey thither. The Red Indians believed that it was a four days' journey to the happy hunting grounds of the spirit world. In the "Odyssey," Ulysses sails all day, until at sunset he reaches a land at the limits of the earth, and at last arrives at the Islands of the Blest, where rain and snow fall not, and where dwell the good after death. Long ago the inhabitants of the French coast of the English Channel believed that the souls of the dead were ferried across to Britain, and there are still traces of this belief in the folk-lore of Brittainy. While in the Roman Kalendar there is a saint who is at once

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the patroness of travellers and of departed saints. The legend tells of her that during her life she established hospices for those who journeyed, and since her death she gives entertainment to spirits on their way to Paradise. The journey thither takes, it is said, three days; on the first night the fleeting spirit lodges with her, on the second with St. Gabriel, and on the third it enters Paradise.

But this is not the Gospel Jesus preaches to dying, and yet never-dying men and women, from the pulpit of the Cross of Calvary when He says, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." As one writes, "He does not say, in the Day of Judgment I will place thee on My right hand with the just. He does not say, after so many years of purgatory I will bring thee to a place of refreshment, not, after some months or days will I comfort thee; but to-day, before the sun shall set, thou shalt pass with Me from the sufferings of the Cross to the delights of Paradise."

And this is what St. Paul meant when he told those to whom he was writing that "to be absent from the body is," (not will be), "to be present with the Lord." And if when the Lord comes those who are alive shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

of the Intermediate State? so

think you we can count the hours or measure the distance to be traversed by the spirit that has flown from the cage of the earthly body into the Rest of Paradise of God. "The world of spirits," writes J. H. Newman, "though unseen is present, not future, not distant. It is not above the sky; it is not beyond the grave; it is now and here."

But there are other conditions revealed to us which help to make the life of Paradise more real, and therefore the truth at once more practical and more comforting.

It is a life of Blessedness, i.e., of Happiness. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit. They rest from their labours, and their works follow with them."

How magnificently is the full force of this Paradise brought home to us in the Burial Service. We have seen the coffin lowered into the grave; we have taken our last look at the outward sign of mortality; we have heard the solemn words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Our hearts are weighed down by the sense of our loss and we are tempted to think only of our loneliness, when suddenly the glad Anthem breaks in on our sorrow, "I heard a voice saying unto

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me, write, From henceforth blessed are the dead," etc. It is like the singing of the birds when the storm has broken. It is like the shining of the light of day after a long wakeful night. It comes to us in such splendid contrast to all the surroundings—the open grave, the upturned soil, the mourners standing round—and instinctively as we hear it we cease to look down, and instead we look up into the Paradise of God where our dead live. We are sad, but they are glad. We are weeping, but they rejoice. We are lonely without them, but they are realizing as never before communion with their Lord and His saints. We are in the cloud of sorrow, and they in the sunshine of blessedness. Say, must we not, amid our tears, thank God for those who have entered into joy and felicity, and pray that their going from us, which seemed the destruction of our happiness, may be turned to our everlasting profit; pray that He will give us grace so to follow their good examples that we may be partakers with them of His Heavenly Kingdom.

Yes, thank God, we believe in the blessedness of Paradise, and we do not believe in the pains of Purgatory. Oh, when will men cease to malign God's character, cease to disfigure God's love, by putting the traditions

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of erring and sinning men in the place of the teaching of the infallible Spirit of Truth?

The life of Paradise is a life of Rest. Rest from what? Not from work, as we shall see later, when we come to speak of the occupations of Paradise. Rest from work would not be happiness but misery. But rest from labour, from the weariness and worry which spoil work, from the struggle and toil which are inseparable from work on earth.

"They rest from their labours," for these labours are part of the curse which sin has brought with it into the world, and sin and sin's curse have no place in Paradise.

They rest from temptation. ^{but not from working, if progress there} There was a place for temptation in Eden, for man's life there was a state of probation. Man was innocent, but he was untried, untested, untempted. He must pass through the furnace, if innocency was to be worth having. But in Paradise the probation time is over. The righteous have been greatly tried, tried as gold in the furnace, and by divine grace they have come forth refined, purified, and made meet for the service of God. Their will is become one with the will of God, and no sinful sugges-

* Where the wicked cease ⁵⁵ from working, & the weary are at rest.

☞ What are the Conditions

tion is possible. Evil cannot live in the atmosphere of Paradise.

They rest from doubt. Here we are perplexed and harassed; we are in a state of salvation, but we are not saved. The waves of this troublesome world break over us, and we cry out in our fear. But there, as St. Cyprian says, "withdrawn from the storms, we gain the haven of our everlasting rest and security." Here we hope, but we tremble lest our hope should, through our own fault, fail and leave us in the darkness of despair. But there hope is lost in fruition. Here we believe, but our faith again and again shivers and trembles with the shaking of doubt. But there faith becomes sight, and "I believe" is changed into "I know." ✱

They rest from care. Cares and anxieties are the rust and moth of earth. They are inseparable from the life here. God's people cannot be exempt from them on earth. They have their use. They engender watchfulness; they foster dependence upon God; they point us to the hills whence cometh our help. But there neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, for God's people are where their treasure is, safe in the arms of Jesus.

How we see as through a glass darkly
but then face to face.⁵⁶

of the Intermediate State? so

Rest from the fear of death, and to whom is not death a solemn reality? It is only the frivolous or unthinking who treat death lightly. But in Paradise death has for ever lost its terrors. It has been despoiled of its power. It has done its worst, and, seen from the other side of the grave, it is only the gateway through which the spirits have passed into light and rest. Nowhere do they cry with such triumph as in Paradise. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rest, yes, there was the happiness of rest in Eden's Garden. Rest, the story tells of, peaceful and unbroken, until sin the destroyer found an entrance into man's heart and life, and rest was exchanged for sin and sorrow, for toil and trouble.

Rest, yes, there is blessed rest in the spirit world, rest that can never be disturbed.

Surely this is the prominent thought in the Saviour's promise, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It spoke to the dying penitent of shelter, security, peace, happiness in the life of the Paradise of God, as contrasted with the helplessness, the sufferings, the misery, the death, the shame of the Cross.

❖ What are the Conditions, etc.

Thus then let us think of our dead, dead as we say they are, but living as we know they are. Theirs is a life of identity, of unbroken continuity with their life on earth, a life of blessedness, a life of rest, ay, a life of joy and felicity.

So will we thank God for His mercy towards those we loved when they were with us, and love not the less now they are gone, but all the more because our love is not of the earth, earthy.

So will we pray for ourselves that we may so live here that the life of Paradise may be ours when this life is ended.

So will we pray for them and ourselves that we, with them, may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul in His eternal and everlasting Glory.

V.

What are They Doing?

"Their works follow with them."

THEY rest. There is no characteristic of the spirit world more repeatedly emphasized in Holy Scripture than rest.

Jesus contrasts not only the rest of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom with the torments of the rich man in Hades, but also with the life of misery he had lived as an outcast and a beggar on earth. "Now he is comforted, but thou art in anguish." And in His promise to the dying penitent surely He is placing side by side the rest of the spirit world with the unrest of the man's body and soul on the cross. St. Paul compares the rest that is coming with the unrest that is present, "For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, and are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews argues, "There remaineth

❧ What are They Doing?

therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." St. John sums up the life of those in Paradise in the glorious anthem, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." The Church caught up the spirit of the song of the unseen choirs, and the early Christians wrote as their favourite inscription on their stony tombs, "in pace," while in every ancient Liturgy which we have inherited from the long ago of Christianity this truth of the rest of God's people finds a place.

But rest from what?

"Rest from their labours," not rest from work, from occupation. We are not, as we have seen, to think of Paradise as a spiritual "cemetery" or "sleeping place," as the word in the original literally means, where those we call dead lie in restful slumber, waiting to be awaked when the Resurrection Day dawns. Nay, it is a living, active state, where God's people are busy.

"Rest from their labours," from the worry and weariness which makes the work of life toil, and life itself labour and sorrow, but not from work. Work is God's law and intention for man, but God's design has been marred by sin, by fatigue, by weakness, by

"Where the wicked cease from troubling,
The weary are at rest."⁶⁰

What are They Doing ?

abuses, by ill-health, by disappointments, by mistakes, by a sense of failure, by the knowledge that it has been badly done, or begun and left unfinished, and human nature does not love work, because here it is inseparable from those things which spoil it.

"Rest from their labours," not from work, for life must be active. Inactivity is not sleep but death. Even in the stillness of winter, when the world is wrapped in the white shroud of snow, and all is so still, God's machinery is at work, though, like all God's working, and unlike man's, it is noiseless and quiet.

The pre-historic story of creation conveys to us a deep truth when it tells how God, when He made man, put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it, and bade him name and classify the lower animal world around him. In a word, God gave him work to do with hand and brain. And the nature of man's body, the character of his capacities, the constitution of all these powers with which he has been endowed by God, physical, intellectual, spiritual, all reveal unmistakably that God's design for man is work, and he who does nothing with hand or brain or spirit is frustrating God's purpose, falling short of God's glory, neglecting to use his talents, and missing the true secret of happiness here on earth.

What are They Doing?

"Rest from their labours," not from work, for those in Paradise are blessed, and none can be truly happy who are resisting God's will and frustrating His design.

"Rest from their labours," not from work, for idleness is not rest. Change of employment is the only true rest for man.

"Rest from their labours," not from work. For work is God's law in the unseen and spiritual world as in the material world, where we sojourn for a short time. Angels have their work, and do God's pleasure. There in Heaven the work of worship is theirs. Here on earth the work of service to men is theirs. "Are they not all worshipping spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation."

Yea, God Himself is ever working. How beautifully is this, too, brought home to us in the Mosaic story, "God rested on the seventh day, from all the work which He had made"? "Rested," that is, from the work of creation of His earth, rested as One Who has finished the work upon which He has been engaged. But He did not cease to work because He rested, and so the story goes on without a break to tell of God's working to preserve, order, watch over the work whose creation He had accomplished.

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There is no contradiction between these words of Moses (or whoever the writer may have been), who speaks with the lisping, stammering tongue of primitive days, and the words of the Divine Teacher Who taught with authority when He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," as though He would say to the Jews who found fault with the sign He had worked on the Sabbath day—"God rested on the Sabbath day ; true, but He did not cease to work. He is always resting, but He is always working. His work knows no toil, no labour. With Him rest and work go together. My Father worketh even until now, and as with Him, so it is with Me, and I must work."

"They rest from their labours, and their works follow with them." They do not leave their works behind as they pass from the workshop of earth, only the toil and anxiety of work. Their works go after them and with them. "Their works, *i.e.*, what," writes J. Vaughan, "they used to do and loved to do for God in this present world, follow them, to be taken up again in some higher and holier manner there. The tastes they formed, the services in which they delighted, the ministrations which they occupied here—they have not ceased to be, but are surely renewed in that higher state. And

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is it not an animating thought to think that all we now do for God is the beginning of something which we are to continue to do for ever and ever, and for ever and ever to continue to improve to do? Is it not very pleasant to realize that those we love there are carrying on still their loving occupations which we remember in them so well when they were with us here? The struggle, the distress, the toil of work is past for ever, only the work remains, and work is never a hurtful thing. Work, as God made and intended it, is all happiness."

Ay, and in this work Jesus Himself is their leader. As on earth, so in Paradise, they may work "looking unto Him." In this as in all else, there as here, He shows His people the way. For He was not idle during His short stay in the spirit world. Weary and worn with the work He had come to do, and had finished in His death, He did not rest with the rest of inactivity, doing nothing, as we say of our resting times. Nay, we are told that the putting to death of His body was the quickening of His spirit, as it were, with fresh additional life. Freed from the burden of the flesh, His spiritual powers found there room for wider usefulness and endeavour. And He Who came to earth

What are They Doing? so

to seek and to save the lost, in the Intermediate State continued His work of love and mercy, and preached the good news of redemption "to the spirits in prison which aforetime were disobedient."

There is something too very thought-arresting in the way in which St. John, in the Apocalypse, links together work on earth with work in Paradise. He does not forget that while work on earth is work in which there has been toil and pain, the work of Paradise is full of rest. Is not this what he means in that splendid picture of the white-robed throng who are keeping their great spiritual Feast of Tabernacles in the tents of the Paradise life? "These are they which have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"—This is the life and work of earth, with all its labour and unrest, upon which he is looking back. "Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple"—This is the life of service in Paradise, of those who rest not day and night. And yet they rest from their labours, for "He that sitteth on the Throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike upon them,

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nor any heat, for the Lamb Who is in the midst of the Throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them into fountains of water of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

What then do we know about the nature of their work in Paradise? What are they doing?

Surely we must put in the foremost place the work of communion with Christ.

It is spiritual communion such as men can never enjoy in like measure here below. The chosen twelve did not know it as they companied with Jesus when He went in "and went out" among them during His three years' ministry. Not even the privileged three, who were with Him in the room when Jairus' daughter lay dead, or had seen His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, or His Agony and Bloody Sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane, could know what the communion of Paradise must be to the saints of God. Their communion with their Lord on earth was broken and disturbed. Long intervals there were when He was withdrawn from them, and they were left alone in their helplessness and timidity; times there were when their dulness of spirit and earthly-mindedness came between them and His illuminating

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Presence as fog and mist shut out the bright shining of the sun.

Yea, the spiritual communion which those who live in Christ on earth are permitted to taste in secret prayer, in quiet meditation, in the gathering together of the two or three, in the sweet nearness of their Lord in Holy Communion, is again and again spoiled, and its realization dimmed through our own fault; it is hindered by our fitfulness, our waywardness, our worldliness.

But in Paradise it is spiritual communion close and uninterrupted, for it is to be "for ever with the Lord." This is the communion of which Jesus was speaking when He promised, "Thou shalt be *with Me* in Paradise." Rest and communion with Christ go together.

Ay, and they have communion not only with Jesus but in and through Him with one another.

Such communion is part of the identity and mutual recognition of which we have already spoken. The Communion of Saints, in which we confess our belief, is realized and enjoyed in Paradise as it cannot be by us on earth. Here we are separated by material things; our very bodies are a barrier to its practise, so that we realize it but faintly, just because we are in the flesh.

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Here we are divided and parted by our ignorance. We know so little, and our differences in belief are so many and so exaggerated.

But in Paradise all these cobwebs are swept away. The spirit has broken through its earthly barriers. Knowledge is no longer in part, but we shall know as we have been known. Communion there is spiritual communion, and so it is real and enduring. The "holy fellowship for grace to continue in which" we pray in the Thanksgiving of our Communion Office is not broken by death, but hallowed and sanctified.

But there is also the work of worship in Paradise.

To us worship is full of difficulties, and so restless. "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The reality of worship depends on the realization of the worth of Him we worship. And here on earth this perception of God is faulty; it is weakened by the shortsightedness of our spiritual vision, our realization of Divine Truth.

But there, "quickened in Spirit," they gaze on the holiness of God, and sing with Angels and Archangels the Holy, Holy, Holy, which oftens means so little to us.

And in their worship they rest not day or night, for

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the work of worship "brings no weariness with them." Well may we say, as we catch a glimpse of the worship of the Spirits in Paradise—

"Three in One, and One in Three,
Dimly here we worship Thee;
With the Saints hereafter we
Hope to bear the palm."

But, once more, the work of Progress is theirs in Paradise.

Progress is God's law for life—life cannot stand still. Just in proportion as it is healthy and vigorous there must be corresponding growth and development. So it is ever in things spiritual. So it must be in the life of the spirit world. "The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day," and the perfect day has not yet come to those we are speaking of, for they are in the Intermediate State in Paradise, not in Heaven.

In what does this progress consist?

It is progress in Holiness. It is the growth of sanctification which is God's will for each and all of His children. "Follow after the sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

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And what is this sanctification? It is the surrender of human will to the Divine will. The will of God made the one standard of every thought and word and deed. It is conformity to the Divine image.

Is this work perfected at death in any of God's people? Certainly there was abundant room for sanctification in the penitent thief. Forgiveness was his, full and free. Pardon and peace were the dying Saviour's gift to him in his dying. The load of sin's guilt was taken off his spirit, as, freed from sin, he became the servant of God. But what of the growth in him of personal holiness? What of the ripening of character? What of godly experience? Where and when was this work to be accomplished if there is no spiritual growth after death? And though those who die in the Lord may not have sinned as that man sinned, though the record of their life may not be black like his, yet who among those who pass from among us has not need of sanctification? Surely it is of this work of progress St. Paul is speaking when he writes to the Church at Philippi, "being confident of this very thing, that He Which began a good work in you will perfect ^{it} until the day of Jesus Christ"—the day, that is, when "the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to be glorified in His saints."

What are They Doing? so

Why should we doubt that there is this Progress? Do not let us be frightened by the false doctrine of Purgatory and leave go of this truth, with all the comfort it brings to those who are conscious of the faults and failings in character and conduct of loved ones who have been taken from them. Biographies may pass over in silence the weaknesses and mistakes of those they tell about, but need we?

Nay, there is room for purification in Paradise, the purification which is wrought not in suffering, but in rest and peace. The Spirit of God has not ceased to energize with His gracious influences in the spirits of those who are no longer in the body. But there is this great difference: His working is unimpeded in Paradise by sin as it is ever on earth. The pipes of communication are no longer choked. The grace of Almighty God, which here below, through man's fault, finds its way to the soul so intermittingly, and is often stopped and hindered, there in Paradise flows in an unceasing, constant, abundant stream, for there is no sin to put obstacles in its way.

There is Progress in Knowledge. The work of Paradise is educational. Paradise is not home but school, God's highest school, where the primary lessons

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man was set to learn on earth open out in ever wider and wider truths. We know so little here; we learn so slowly. It would indeed be sad if we really believed, for ourselves or others, that our spiritual education ended at death. Nay, it cannot be, it is not so. If angels in Heaven are pictured "stooping down" in their eagerness to look into and learn the mysteries of God's love, surely the redeemed spirits in Paradise must want to know more perfectly those mysteries which they knew so faintly on earth.

Yes, glorious must be the education of Paradise which awaits the children of God, for the self-will, the gross ignorance, the hindrances within and without, the discordant voices which call us from our learning on earth can find no entrance there.

And all this Progress a work which knows no weariness.

Bishop Westcott reminds us that Repose and Progress are suggested by the "mansions" spoken of by our Lord in His last discourse with His disciples in the Upper Room. Our rendering, he says, comes from the word in the Vulgate or Latin Version of the Bible, which means not "abiding" but rather "resting places"—stations on a road where pilgrims

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find refreshments as they journey towards their destination—rest-houses such as travellers in the East are familiar with. So those in Paradise are ever moving onward. Their life a life of Progress, but a Progress that brings no weariness with it. No longer are they pilgrims down here in the valley of weeping, amid cloud and shadow, but they are climbing higher and higher the slopes of the celestial mountains in the sunshine of Paradise. Onward, ever onward, they go from strength to strength, until they shall every one of them appear before God in the Heavenly Zion.

VI.

What Have They to do with Us, and We with Them?

"Ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect."

WE have seen where they are who die in the Lord; how it is with them; what they are doing.

But we are not satisfied to stop there. What we know, like all true knowledge, makes us want to know more. We know it is well with them. They are with Christ in Paradise, resting, yet working. But we want to know too what they have to do with us, and what we have to do with them.

Are we wrong in wanting to know? No, not if we ask in a right spirit. Not if we are satisfied with what is revealed to us, and what we can fairly gather from what is told us. Not if we are patient, content here only to "know in part," and to wait.

More would be told now if it were good for us to know

What have They to do with Us, etc. &c.

more. More would be told us now if we could understand it here. God's love is shown as much by what in His wisdom He withholds from us as by what He tells us. If we are kept in ignorance it is because we are not yet capable of knowing and understanding.

What, then, we very humbly ask, what have they to do with us?

They remember us. They must remember if their life in Paradise is conscious and continuous. They must remember if they retain their identity, if they are themselves, and not someone else.

What an important part of us memory is. Have you ever known someone who has suddenly lost his memory and has forgotten who he is and everything that has happened to him in the past? He is the same person in some respects, but his identity has lost its reality. He does not remember those he used to love, and with memory love is gone. The links between the past and present are snapped, and those he used to know well are become strangers to him, with whom he has nothing in common. Yes, memory is an essential part of the consciousness, continuity, identity of life.

And in Paradise those who have been taken from us can no more forget us than they can forget the

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experience of the past and the lessons they learned in the school time of the life on earth. Rest from their labours does not bring forgetfulness with it. That would not be truly a blessed state which was only another word for oblivion. A life, whose influence is to make those who possess it wrap themselves up in their own happiness and forget, could not be of God. Even in the suffering of Hades the rich man was told to remember how it had been with him and the poor man on earth, and, selfish though he was, he remembered in his punishment his five brethren.

They love us.

are the same in identity,
They must if they remember, or they would be sadly changed. Terrible indeed would death be if it could kill love as well as, according to some, crush out remembrance. We might as well believe that the heart of one who loves you can change from love to hate, as he passes out of your sight from the room in which he was conversing with you so lovingly into the next room, as believe that the love of one, who in his dying spoke to you tender words of farewell, is changed by death into cold indifference, because he had gone out of the earthly into the Intermediate State.

The Paradise of God cannot mean this. Its atmos-

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"with Me." "God is Love." With Love, being loved, loving, & being quickened, they must love us more than ever; & yearn after us.

and We with Them? so

phere cannot destroy the love of earth, if it is lawful and pure and innocent, for Paradise is the Garden of the King of Love. There love must grow more bright and pure and unselfish. There the flame of affection must be cleared from all the things which dimmed its shining, and burn with a stronger light than ever it had on earth. Even Dives, selfish and unloving as he must have been in this life, not only remembered but began in Hades to take thought for the well-being of his five brethren still on earth. How then can the peace of Paradise extinguish the love, when even the torment of Hades helped to quicken it into life?

when from the Garden the flame

They know about us.

Surely they cannot be in entire ignorance of all that concerns those from whom they have been taken. Can we believe that they remember and love and yet know nothing about us? This cannot be. Such uncertainty and such rest cannot co-exist. They must have some knowledge of how it is with those on earth whom they still love, still remember.

"was" but "is"

Nor, on the other hand, can it be true, as some tell us, that they know all about us, see everything, follow our very footsteps, are more with us than was possible

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in the days of the flesh. Would that tend to restfulness? How could they know our sorrow, our trials, our losses, our sickness, our suffering without drawing forth the anxious sympathy which, when they were with us, made them weep with those that weep. Such complete knowledge, if it were possible, would break their rest and disturb their peace, as they looked on our trouble and could do nothing to help us. True they are spirits, but spirits are not endowed with omniscience and omnipresence or they would be as God Himself.

How then do they know about those on earth? Not by any immediate or direct power of apprehension, for their life in Paradise is lived in another sphere than ours. Even Spiritualism, while it claims the power of holding communications with the spirits of the dead by means of table-turning and rapping and spirit-writing, points out that a real source of danger is to be found in the fact that the spirits who linger about our earth are the worst. And one of its greatest authorities ¹ quotes with approval the words of a well-known trance medium when she states "that the disembodied spirits of the good quit the sphere of earth

¹Dr. Wallace.

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for a higher state, but that it is the spirits of the wicked who for the most part visit men."

How then can and do they know about those they love? Only in and through Jesus. In Paradise they live in Him, as they lived and died in Him here below. In Him they are one with us. Through and in Him they are in communion with saints on earth. They no not know, nor want to know, the details of this earthly life. Their interest is absorbed and centred in the spiritual concerns of those they love. These are the things they care to know, and these alone are revealed to them in the spirit world.

Seen and apprehended in this light how different all they are allowed to know about us must appear. There they realize for us as we cannot for ourselves that the things which seem to be against us are for us. There they understand as we cannot that "to them that love God all things work together for good." There they recognize better than we can that "our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory," for they "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." And to them, in a very real sense, "the

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things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

They pray.

We cannot believe they have ceased to pray in Paradise?

What is Prayer? Even if it were only asking God for "those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul," there would be room for prayer in Paradise. For, as we have seen, theirs is an imperfect state. (1) They have no body.

(1) The completeness of being in which God made man at first is wanting in the Paradise of God. They are waiting for the resurrection body to be given to them.

(2) They are in a condition of growth in sanctification, and have not yet attained "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

(3) Theirs is not "the perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul" which awaits the saints of God. Their cup of happiness is as full as their powers will permit. They have all the felicity their spirits are capable of in an imperfect state, but a greater blessedness will be theirs when body and spirit are reunited. And for that day which shall bring all this to them they are waiting, expecting.

Does prayer Abraham ⁸⁰ to allow, etc.

and We with Them ?

Surely then there must be a place for prayer in Paradise. Even as St. John pictures the spirits under the altar praying, "They cried with a great voice, How long, O Master, the holy and true?"

But prayer is more than asking. It is communion with God. It is the child talking to the Father, laying open its heart, telling all that is in its thoughts, keeping nothing back. Who that has tried to pray thus on earth shall deny to the spirits of the faithful the privilege of such converse with God, this untold gladness of personal communion with Him Whom they know there as they never knew on earth, nor doubt that without let or hindrance they tell Him all as they tried to do but often failed amid the disturbing influences of the earthly life?

They pray with us.

The Communion of Saints is not only the holy bond which unites God's people on earth one to another, and knits together the saints in Paradise in common rest and work, but it also binds together in common worship those on earth and those in Paradise.

"One family, we dwell in Him ;
One Church above, below,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

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And when can we realize this oneness so fully as in Holy Communion? For Holy Communion is but the earthly representation of the worship of Paradise. Here, in broken bread and poured out wine, we "show forth the Lord's death till He come," while there, where there is no place or need of Sacrament, they worship "the Lamb as though it had been slain." And so in Holy Communion we not only praise with Angels and Archangels, but we pray "that we and all *Thy whole Church*, at rest as well as militant, may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of His passion."

They pray for us.

Separated from those they loved on earth, whom they still remember and love, for whom they were wont to pray when they were with them here, must they, can they, cease to pray for them now? Is this our idea of spiritual rest for them? Nay, because they are in the rest of Paradise all the more earnest must their prayers, all the more real the outpouring of their heart in the peace of Paradise, for us who are still battling for dear life in the storm.

And what have we to do with them?

May we remember them, or must we forget them? Out of sight, are they also to be out of mind?

and We with Them? so

Nay, this is not the counsel of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he writes, "Remember those that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the Word of God, and considering the issue of their life imitate their faith."

And the great Intercessory Prayer of our Communion Office repeats this wise and comforting counsel when it calls on us to remember in our prayers before God all those who have gone from us, "We also bless Thy Holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear."

May we love them?

How can we help doing so? If distance here cannot divide us in heart and thought from those we love on earth, neither can the space (if there be any between earth and Paradise) which the spirit traverses in a flash of time so short that it is not time, separate our dead from our love.

May we pray to them? May we invoke the aid and intercessions of departed saints on our behalf?

Holy Scripture does not even hint at such an attitude towards those in Paradise. Such a practice has no support in primitive Liturgies. It certainly is not recognized by our Church. On the contrary, everywhere the

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Invocation of Saints, which was introduced in the ignorance of Mediæval times, has been cut out of our Prayer Book. "There is nothing like such prayers," says a late Archbishop of Canterbury, "in the Bible, and the Church of England has swept away all worship except to God Himself. No worship is allowed to any Apostles, no invocation to any Saints, no, not to the Mother of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary. All prayer to any but God Himself in the Three Persons of the Trinity, and all invocations to those who are passed away from this life, are alike condemned and are not allowed to her children."

May we pray for them?

Is not the negative answer to this question, such as is often given, a reaction from the "Romish doctrine of Purgatory," which taught men that prayers for the dead meant prayers for the release of the spirits of the faithful from painful purification from sin, and with the refusing to believe in such a Purgatory came the rejection of all prayers for the dead?

And yet it is quite certain that prayers for the dead formed a part of the Synagogue worship in which our Lord regularly took part, and that "not one word of protest is recorded as uttered by Him against the prac-

and We with Them? so

tice or the belief which it implied." ¹ The testimony of the early Christian writers, from Tertullian in A.D. 200 onward; the inscriptions in the Catacombs, from the close of the first to the beginning of the fifth century, in which we find prayers that "greater peace may be granted, and fuller happiness to those who have entered into rest"; all the early Liturgies which have been handed down to us from primitive times; the writings of such divines as Archbishop Usher, Jeremy Taylor, Bishops Andrews and Wilson, staunch champions of the faith as we have received it; the three Collects in the Preces Privatæ of Queen Elizabeth, issued amid the very throes of the Reformation; all these speak of prayer for those who have died in the Lord as part of our Christian heritage. *

And while in the Reformation changes many prayers were removed from the Prayer Book which embodied in them the corrupt teaching of Purgatory, and which were prayers for the deliverance of the faithful dead from the pains and sufferings in the Intermediate State, our Church deliberately retained prayers for the dead which are free from these mediæval superstitions and errors. Thus in the Church Militant Prayer we are ?

¹ Plumptre.

* So also, Archbishop ⁸⁵ Dainton, (Cant.)

What Have They to do with Us,

* bid to pray not only for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth, but also to remember in our prayers the Church at rest, and, while blessing God's Holy Name for those who have departed this life in His faith and fear, to pray "that with them we may be partakers of Thy everlasting Kingdom," i.e., of the full fruition in Heaven which awaits all God's people, whether they are on earth or in Paradise.

But we find this attitude of Prayer for those in Paradise still more forcibly emphasized in our Burial Service. Having thanked God for those who are delivered from the burden of the flesh, we go on to pray, "beseeching Thee to grant that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss in "Thy eternal and everlasting glory," that perfect state which is not yet the lot of those in Paradise. So the Church lays down distinctly the lines on which we may pray for those in Paradise, and tells us what to pray for.

How could it be otherwise? Such prayer is an instinct of our spiritual life. We may protest against it in the days of happiness, but when our sorrow comes we feel we cannot do without it.

Archbishop Magee put forward an almost passionate

* ⁸⁶ Not intended to be a prayer for the dead. Let us pray for the Church militant here on earth. Anything more is accidental.

and We with Them? so

plea for the practice: "What an unspeakable comfort and refreshment to mourners on earth was lost to us when we were entirely deprived of the custom. It is so natural, so innocent. It does bring those who are gone so near again. It does so realize for us the oneness of the great Kingdom of Christ in all time and place, that I, for one, have always lamented its loss, and had one grudge the more at the Church of Rome for so spotting that part of the robe of worship with the flesh that we had to tear it all away."

Thank God we are not, as he seems to think, entirely deprived of the custom. Prayer for the dead is not all torn out of our Services, but, as we have seen in Holy Communion, the highest act of Christian worship as well as in the solemn hour of burying our dead it is still left to us. And so Archbishop Benson wrote: "To pray for the dead is not forbidden in the New Testament, and is not forbidden by our Church. We may pray God to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His Kingdom, and so bring them to their perfect happiness when soul and body are reunited."

But what do we mean by prayers for the dead? What is all intercessory prayer for those dear to us, whether they are on earth or in Paradise? Surely it is our love

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and our sympathy for them directed Godward, even as the High Priest of old entered into the Holy Place wearing next his heart the breast-plate with the names of the tribes of Israel, and bringing them in remembrance before God, as he interceded at the Mercy-Seat.

And are we forbidden to bring into God's presence the names on heart and lip of loved ones in Paradise, because they are at rest? Are we really to tell little children, when father or mother dies, that they must leave the name out of their prayers when they draw near God, and must cease to say, "God bless dear father or mother"? What! are they out of reach of God's blessing? Will God cease to listen or be impatient with us because we still ask Him to bless those who are beyond our earthly care, and for whom the only thing we can do is to commend them day by day into His Almighty, All-merciful keeping?

Ah, but some say, "God will bless them without our asking." True, but so He will, so He does bless them when they are on earth, and if this argument is sufficient there would be no need to ask God to bless our loved ones in this life, but we may be satisfied to leave them in His Hands.

Again, it is urged "we know so little about them."

But He says as to ask in this world;
see same mt. vol. 1 ch. 1. re prayer.

True

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How can we pray for them? And yet we commend daily to our Father's keeping this one on a long voyage, or that one living far away in a distant land, of whom we have not heard for many a long day, and of whose present condition we know nothing—whether they are ill or well, glad or sorry, alive or dead. Yet we do not cease to pray for them because we know not how it fares with them, but we ask that wherever they may be, and however it may be with them, God, Who knows all, will take care of and bless them in body and spirit.

How then can there be no place in prayer for loved ones who are with the Lord, resting, working, praying, learning, growing, waiting?

But what shall we pray for?

This is an all-important question. Here, we who believe in Paradise, part company in our prayers from those who pray for their loved ones who are, as they believe, in Purgatory.

We do not pray for their deliverance from pain and suffering, for they are at rest and in peace; for them sorrow and sickness have ceased for ever.

We do not pray for their forgiveness, for pardon is theirs, full and free, and sin and temptation henceforth cannot touch them.

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What Have They to do with Us,

We do not pray for them as we are invited to pray in a Litany for the faithful departed recommended to Anglican Church-people: "From Thy wrath; from the rigour of Thy Judgment; from the power of the devil; from the gnawing worm of conscience; from gnashing of teeth; from the flames of hell; from horrible darkness—Good Lord, deliver them." God forbid that we should pray thus.

But we may pray for their spiritual growth, for their progress toward perfection of character and experience. We may pray for the increase of their capacity to enjoy deeper peace and happiness, greater growth and light, and knowledge. We may pray God shortly to accomplish the number of His elect and to hasten His coming, and so bring them to their perfect consummation and bliss. We may pray, if we dare say nothing else, that God would bless them.

So men of diverse ways of thinking have prayed.

So Jeremy Taylor exhorted men to cultivate the fuller realization of the Communion of Saints in many ways, and not least "by preserving the good memorial of the dead, and desiring of God with hearty and constant prayer that He would give them a joyful resurrection and a merciful judgment in that awful day

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in which the most righteous person has need of much mercy and pity, and shall find it."

So John Wesley commended such prayer as clearly justified by the earliest antiquity and by the Church of England.

So the great Lord Shaftesbury wrote on the death of Canning: "I do feel compassion, and pray sincerely, 'God rest his soul.'" And so, commemorating his departed wife, he prayed, "And, O God, may I pray that our blessed and pious children gone before us (and here he names each) may be with us, for truly did they love Thee and Thy Blessed Son."

So we may pray, only, as in all our prayers, so not least in our prayers for those in Paradise, we must pray in the true spirit of prayer which is inseparable from our ignorance in asking, and say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

The following prayer, which was sent to me some time back, seems to me most true to the revealed will of God:—

¹ "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, in Whose embrace all creatures live, in whatsoever world or condition they be; I beseech Thee for *him* whose name

¹ Published by A. Phillips, Northill, Biggleswade.

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and dwelling-place and every need Thou knowest. Lord, vouchsafe *him* light and rest, peace and refreshment, joy and consolation in Paradise, in the companionship of Saints, in the Presence of Christ, in the ample folds of Thy great love.

“Grant that *his* life [so troubled here] may unfold itself in Thy sight, and find a sweet employment in the spacious fields of eternity. If *he* hath ever been hurt or maimed by any unhappy word or deed of mine, I pray Thee of Thy great pity to heal and restore *him*, that *he* may serve Thee without hindrance.

“Tell *him*, O gracious Lord, if it may be, how much I love *him*, and miss *him*, and long to see *him* again; and, if there be ways in which *he* may come, vouchsafe *him* to me as a guide and guard, and grant me a sense of *his* nearness, in such degree as Thy laws permit.

“If in aught I can minister to *his* peace, be pleased of Thy love to let this be; and mercifully keep me from every act which may deprive me of the sight of *him* as soon as our trial-time is over, or mar the fulness of our joy when the end of the days hath come.

“Pardon, O gracious Lord and Father, whatsoever is amiss in this my prayer, and let Thy will be done;

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for my will is blind and erring, but Thine is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Who cannot pray this prayer (or part of it) for loved ones in the rest of Paradise, and, praying it, thank God, and take courage?

With this thought we end our consideration of this sacred subject. It is one full of interest, and, I believe and hope, full of practical comfort to those who love and mourn on earth.

Very humbly I ask pardon of God if in anything I have gone beyond or said what is contrary to Divine Truth as He has revealed it to us by His Holy Spirit.

May He in His mercy vouchsafe to bring us all to the rest of Paradise, for His infinite mercy. Amen.

"Jesus in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest,
Who art with God the Father
And Spirit ever blest."

THE END.

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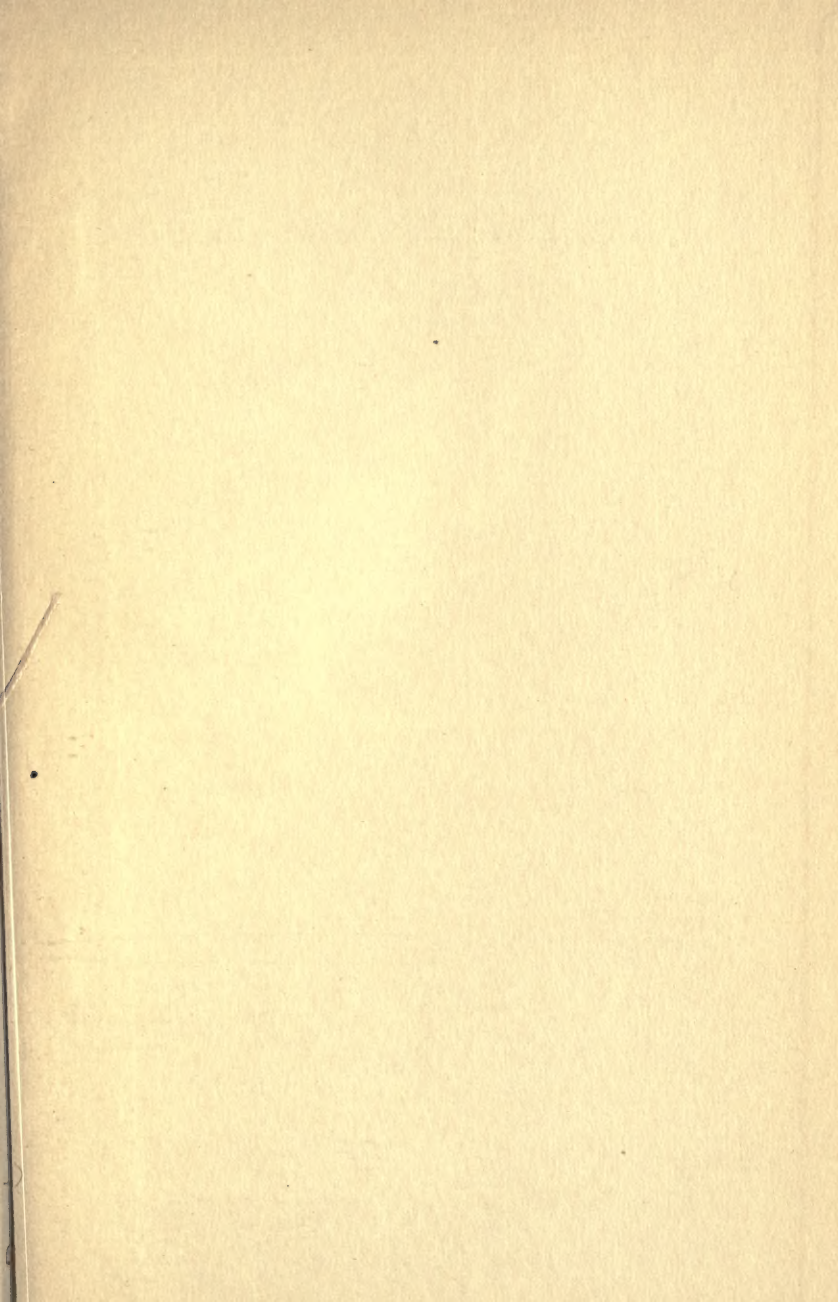
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